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Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report describes the activities of the United Nations system in providing electoral support to Member States over the past two years. The report begins by establishing an international context in which both the benefits of democracy and the credibility of the United Nations in providing electoral assistance are increasingly recognized by Member States.

The report follows up on the warnings contained in previous reports that electoral assistance risks becoming a victim of its own success. As demands on the assistance infrastructure have increased, resources have remained the same. However, despite increasing demands and limited resources, much has been achieved.

During the past two years, the role of the United Nations in technical assistance and in post-conflict elections has increased in quantitative terms and in complexity. The report underlines that both technical assistance and support of post-conflict elections illustrate the importance of forging a better link between electoral events and parallel processes in areas such as human rights, the rule of law, and institution-building.

The report presents a number of recommendations, especially targeting the administrative impediments to unlocking the full capacity of the United Nations.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in conformity with General Assembly resolution 58/180 of 22 December 2003 and covers electoral activities undertaken by the United Nations in the period since the previous report on this subject (A/58/212), issued on 4 August 2003.

2. During the period under review, the involvement of the United Nations in assisting the democratic processes of its Member States was highly visible. The images of voters in Afghanistan in October 2004 and a few months later in Iraq, in January 2005, were vivid reminders of the promise of democracy and of the power of the ballot box to transform subjects of dictatorship or victims of civil war into citizens able to exercise their political rights. United Nations involvement in both of these processes was critical to their success. While these highly visible processes were taking place, the United Nations was also supporting post-conflict elections in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Liberia. At the same time, technical assistance was being provided in numerous countries to improve their electoral processes — work that is less visible but no less important.

3. Despite manifest successes, the capacity of the United Nations in providing electoral assistance remains overstretched. As noted in the previous report under this agenda item, we continue to risk becoming the victims of our own success. Effectiveness increases demand, but the latter is not followed by a concomitant increase in resources to maintain that effectiveness.

4. The complexity, variety and quantity of the electoral assistance being requested of the United Nations are such that we must look beyond the simple consolidation and coordination of existing assets. Additional assets must be provided and more creative synergies must be found within the United Nations system to unlock existing potential. There are increasing demands for democratization characterized by: (a) the holding of elections in places where credible elections have not generally been held; (b) a recognition among "mature" democracies that reforms are required to solve problems unaddressed for too long and to take advantage of new technologies; and (c) a strengthening of the consensus at an international level that democracy is a key means to preserving the dignity and fundamental rights of individuals, to advancing the Millennium Development Goals and to fostering a geopolitical climate that is favourable to international peace.

5. The United Nations, along with several key international partners, has developed a set of practices over the years that have proved to be effective. The consistent defence of these practices in implementing successful electoral projects has given the United Nations a high degree of credibility on elections. Begun amid some scepticism that electoral assistance might encroach on national sovereignty or impose a single model of democracy, United Nations electoral assistance now serves as a recognized arbiter of norms in a period when an increasing number of actors — international, regional and subregional, governmental and non-governmental, profit and non-profit — are providing electoral assistance. The United Nations is thus in a logical position, by mandate and experience, to lead the promotion of the principle of genuine and periodic elections at a time when it is high in the international agenda.

II. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 58/180

6. In dealing with the implementation of General Assembly resolution 58/180, this report will address in greater detail two issues in particular that have been examined in past reports but not treated systematically, namely, increasing the Organization's capacity to provide electoral assistance and mobilizing adequate resources. In previous reports, the question of consolidating electoral assistance capacities and that of coordination in the United Nations system have been treated separately. Increasingly, better coordination has served as an instrument of consolidation. These two issues have therefore been treated jointly in this report.

A. Consolidation and coordination of electoral assistance capacities within the United Nations system

7. In the 13 years since the creation of the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD), a great deal of progress has been made in consolidating and coordinating electoral assistance capacities within the United Nations system. The Division, reporting to the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance Activities (the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs ex officio), remains the central node around which electoral activities within the United Nations system revolve by virtue of the Division's mandated functions, namely, to: (a) ensure consistency in the handling of requests of Member States; (b) ensure careful coordination and consideration of requests for electoral verification and channel requests for electoral assistance to the appropriate office or programme; (c) build on experience gained to develop an institutional memory; (d) develop and maintain a roster of international experts who could provide technical assistance; and (e) maintain contact with regional and other intergovernmental organizations to ensure appropriate working arrangements with them. These functions, and how they contribute to ensuring consistency, were described in more detail in the previous report (paras. 10-14).

8. The Division has worked to fulfil all facets of its mandate during the review period. Unfortunately, one of these — maintaining institutional memory — has not been given the attention it deserves, owing to insufficient resources. Over the long run, having an effective information management structure that allows existing operations to tap into the experiences of previous operations would both save resources and improve the quality of assistance provided. Establishing such a structure requires, however, an initial investment in the form of dedicated staff and improved technology.

9. The coordination of electoral activities within the United Nations has been strengthened through a series of arrangements between the Electoral Assistance Division and the main United Nations entities involved in providing electoral assistance. These include, in particular, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The specific mechanisms were described in the previous report (paras. 15-21).

10. At an operational level, the Electoral Assistance Division has further institutionalized its working relationships with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). These two entities have played increasingly important roles in the implementation

of large-scale electoral projects like those in Afghanistan and Iraq. UNOPS, in particular, has emerged as a vital partner in the implementation of complex electoral projects, given its reliability in procuring supplies and recruiting personnel in complicated environments and under extremely tight timelines. The Electoral Assistance Division and UNOPS are currently finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding that will guide future cooperation on electoral operations, marrying the expertise of the Division and its roster of experts to the unique ability of UNOPS within the United Nations system to systematically deliver on very short notice. Even in operations conducted under the auspices of a Department of Peacekeeping Operations-led peacekeeping mission, UNOPS has played an invaluable role by either filling specific gaps that other parts of the United Nations system could not fill (as in the case of Iraq) or handling all logistics, procurement and hiring for the electoral operation (as in the case of Afghanistan).

11. UNDP is a key partner in the implementation of United Nations electoral technical assistance projects — 47 at present — and has become a critical actor in the efforts of the United Nations to ensure high-quality interventions in the electoral field. Additionally, the partnership between the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP, as detailed in the note of guidance on electoral assistance (A/56/344, annex II), remains one of the most important means of ensuring consistency and coordination in the electoral work of the United Nations. This cooperation has worked well to date, with the Division providing technical advice to all UNDP interventions through needs assessment missions and through ongoing involvement in monitoring and evaluating UNDP electoral activities. However, in the future, it may be useful to revisit the note of guidance to ensure that the building and sharing of institutional memory and lessons are maximized.

12. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations remains an important partner in providing support to electoral processes in post-conflict situations (see paras. 34-64 below). The Electoral Assistance Division is consistently engaged by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the planning and management of electoral support aspects of peacekeeping operations. This cooperation continues to improve based on best practices derived from the now substantial experience of the United Nations in post-conflict elections. At the same time, there are challenges that need to be overcome in meeting time-sensitive electoral needs in procurement, recruitment and security. The Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Safety and Security are working to address those challenges.

13. Peacekeeping mission resources are most often used for backstopping electoral support activities which are part of the mission's mandate. Support to electoral processes is a major logistic exercise for the mission's administration, requiring generation and deployment of large quantities of resources, detailed planning and coordinated implementation. Most of the logistic "heavy-lifting" for electoral support is carried out using logistic resources of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It is therefore critical that appropriate wording on electoral logistic support tasks be included in Security Council mandates so that sufficient resources from assessed contributions are available to support electoral activities.

B. Cooperation with other organizations

14. The United Nations continued to work with other partners around the world in upholding consistent international electoral practices. This work took the form of the signing of agreements by the Electoral Assistance Division with the electoral authorities of a number of Member States and of working with other electoral organizations to agree on joint standards and protocols. For example, during the review period, the Division signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Electoral Commission for the provision of staff and expertise as required in United Nations electoral assistance activities outside India. It also established, with the Electoral Commission of Panama, the International Service of Electoral News, a web-based subscriber news service dedicated to worldwide electoral news. The Instituto Federal Electoral of Mexico, with which the Division had an existing Memorandum of Understanding, played an invaluable role in training the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq formed in June 2004. In September 2005, the Division represented the United Nations at the third conference of Global Electoral Organizations, which brings together electoral experts from across the world to discuss common challenges and opportunities.

15. The Electoral Assistance Division also created the "Integrity Project" with a number of partner organizations (the European Union, the Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the United States of America-based National Democratic Institute) to enhance the integrity of international electoral assistance, including an agreement on principles for international electoral observation and a standard code of conduct which was signed in mid-2005.

16. As a service to all organizations involved in elections, and in order to promote the participation of women in elections, the Electoral Assistance Division, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, issued in March 2005 a handbook on women and elections. This guide, which is also available online, is intended to serve as a quick reference for the United Nations and other actors working on the promotion of women in the political and electoral spheres, at headquarters and in the field.

17. UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat have both been involved in the Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) project, which is about to enter its second phase. The project — essentially an electronic encyclopaedia of information on elections — provides through the Internet user-friendly operationally oriented information on options, detailed procedures, alternative solutions and the administrative and cost implications associated with organizing elections. The project was started by two international organizations, the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Elections Canada, the Instituto Federal Electoral of Mexico, the Electoral Institute of South Africa and UNDP subsequently joined the project as full partners. In the second phase, the ACE project will be expanded to introduce dynamic elements to the web page and develop a knowledge networking and capacity development dimension. The project website has become an indispensable tool for electoral practitioners and students, receiving 800,000 hits per month. The Election Process Information Collection (EPIC), a spin-off of the ACE project, in addition provides users access to

comparative country-by-country data on election systems, laws, management and administration.

18. United Nations cooperation with other electoral organizations on the basis of established agreements proved indispensable in fulfilling the heavy electoral mandate during the review period. Such arrangements, however, only underlined the lack of necessary capacity in the United Nations. Instead of complementing United Nations capacity, in some cases these arrangements had to substitute for that capacity. In the event, these arrangements functioned well, but because they were ad hoc emergency measures, they were not ideal and complicated the planning of an already complex operation. To the extent that high-profile operations could not have been effective without hastily negotiated support from partners, this highlights rather than negates the need for increased capacity.

C. Increasing capacity and mobilizing resources for electoral assistance and democratization

19. There are essentially three ways to increase the United Nations capacity for electoral assistance: maintain those mechanisms that currently work well, improve existing capacities that could lead to better performance, and provide additional resources.

20. The Electoral Assistance Division roster of experts is an important tool for ensuring the consistent provision of high-quality assistance and advice in the electoral field by the United Nations system as a whole. Consultants on the Division's roster are increasingly solicited by other organizations, often at rates that exceed those paid by the United Nations system. A number of other constraints in United Nations rules and regulations make United Nations offers even less attractive. United Nations Secretariat contractual restrictions, salary scales, grading of specialists and benefits are not competitive, even compared with those of other parts of the United Nations system. As a result, the best candidates are not offered competitive remuneration commensurate to their market value and thus are often not available for electoral missions and projects.

21. Financial resource gaps can be met through contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/137 of 17 December 1991. Contributions to this Trust Fund will allow the Electoral Assistance Division to systematize lessons learned, meet needs that are not anticipated in the regular budget, and provide funds on an emergency basis for rapid responses to electoral emergencies. The new United Nations Democracy Fund will provide assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy. I strongly encourage Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation and to the Democracy Fund.

III. Experience of the United Nations

22. Since the creation in 1992 of the Electoral Assistance Division, 326 requests for assistance have been received from 101 Member States (as well as from Kosovo, Palestine and Western Sahara), of which 223 led to electoral assistance projects. During the review period, 40 requests were received and 32 either were accepted or

are currently under consideration. During the same period, 46 States (and Palestine) received electoral assistance. While the number of requests made was similar to that of the past several years, it must be kept in mind that new requests that are accepted add to projects that are still under way, meaning that the total number of projects has increased over the biennium. More importantly, the complexity and visibility of these projects have increased as have, in many cases, the stakes of their outcome.

23. Requests for observation or observation-type assistance (expert monitoring, verification, coordination of observers) (see paras. 32 and 33 below) have begun to increase, following a decade in which few of these requests were made. While in the past, the increasing involvement of regional organizations in observation-type exercises was regarded as positive by the Electoral Assistance Division, diverging methodologies for observation have generated concern. The United Nations has begun to address this by working with organizations to achieve agreement on basic standards of observation.

A. Technical assistance

24. While most technical assistance projects implemented by the United Nations continue to be related to specific events, such as a voter registration drive, an election or a change in the electoral law, there was a slight increase in projects of long-term engagement with national electoral authorities to gradually improve electoral processes. For example, the Electoral Assistance Division, through the UNDP office in Mexico, has been working on a technical level with the Instituto Federal Electoral since 1995 to consistently improve the electoral process in that country. Similarly, the Division and UNDP have provided assistance over several years to Cambodia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Yemen. These projects, which privilege the "electoral" over "elections", are a positive trend. Viable democracies require not only the holding of periodic elections but the strengthening of electoral infrastructures such as electoral commissions, laws and administrative structure, as well as the development of parallel institutions such as a credible judiciary, a free press, and effective political parties. Furthermore, an exclusive focus on the electoral event overlooks the fact that eligible voters tend to be disenfranchised long before the election itself, when voter registration takes place.

25. As stated above, a large majority of the ongoing 47 United Nations electoral technical assistance projects are implemented by UNDP. Because of its focus on development assistance and poverty alleviation, UNDP supports electoral assistance as a primary means for all citizens — especially the poor, women and other disadvantaged sectors of society — to participate in and influence government policy and practice. This requires, among other things, links of accountability between voters and their elected representatives, broad-based political parties, cost-effective election processes, and independent and permanent electoral management bodies.

26. UNDP has seen a 19 per cent increase in the number of country offices providing some form of electoral assistance since 2002 (amounting to about 40 country offices). Most of this assistance is being channelled into two streams — first, provision of long-term capacity development support to professionalize electoral management, and second, provision of policy advice on how to enhance

the participation of underrepresented groups — particularly women — in electoral processes.

27. In 2001, UNDP established the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) as a new instrument for providing it with additional resources with which to address development priorities in democratic governance, and as an alternative to traditional funding arrangements. During the reporting period, the Thematic Trust Fund supported 23 projects in the service line of electoral systems and processes. The Electoral Assistance Division provides support in vetting all projects under the Fund.

28. As noted in the previous report under this item, the nature of technical assistance provided continues to become progressively more complex. This has been due to the increasing array of technological solutions to electoral problems as well as to the natural evolution of electoral processes, where voters increasingly demand greater assurances that the voting process is fair and transparent and that the electoral system represents the best possible political expression of their votes.

29. An emerging trend in technical assistance is ongoing technical support to electoral processes first initiated with United Nations assistance, especially in post-conflict situations. A good example of these "second-generation" projects is found in Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor). United Nations electoral involvement began with the popular consultation in 1999, which was organized by the United Nations. Gradually, electoral implementation was taken over by Timorese. The Electoral Assistance Division provided an electoral management adviser as well as other experts to the new, post-independence electoral management body of Timor-Leste, the Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral (STAE). The Electoral Assistance Division with UNDP and the Secretariado developed a technical assistance project to assist in the holding of local elections in the country. This included the drafting of a local elections law, the conduct of low-tech but sustainable voter registration, and holding of local elections in staggered phases from late 2004 to September 2005.

30. The same pattern applies to Sierra Leone, where the 2004 elections were supported by an electoral team that was part of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). While the elections were initially seen as a success, major flaws of the Election Commission were discovered after a post-electoral audit. The Government, the United Nations and donors agreed to a substantive overhaul of the Commission. The Electoral Assistance Division, UNAMSIL and UNDP prepared a long-term capacity-building project ahead of the 2007 elections that includes delimitation of new electoral constituencies and review and revision of election-related laws.

31. These second-generation projects are producing interesting lessons regarding capacity-building and planning for immediate post-conflict elections. One important lesson is that intense capacity-building efforts for post-conflict electoral administrations might be misplaced. First, they detract from the effort to hold the transitional elections; second, the commissioners and national electoral officers during the transitional period are often not selected for their expertise in electoral administration. It may be preferable for the United Nations to focus on the creation of a new, credible and effective electoral management body, rather than try to build capacity of the "old regime" election commission.

32. The review period also saw an increase in observation-related projects, especially support to international observers (for example, in Bougainville, Ghana, Indonesia, Lebanon and Palestine). Under this modality of assistance, observation experts work with observer organizations and the national Government to brief observers and offer them common facilities so as to ensure that different observation groups cooperate in their deployment plans and, if desired, issue a joint statement. In Lebanon, for example, international observers were invited for the first time, on the occasion of the 2005 parliamentary elections, and a small Electoral Assistance Division team assisted the Government with accrediting and briefing observer groups.

33. Of particular note was the establishment of a liaison office among international observer groups, the Central Electoral Commission of Palestine and the Israeli Foreign Ministry to certify and accredit organizations that wished to observe the December 2004 Palestinian elections. The liaison office drafted a code of conduct and assisted in the coordination of deployment plans, provided background materials, conducted briefings on logistics and security, and also interacted with the relevant authorities to ensure safe and rapid passage of observers through checkpoints. In 2005, the Central Electoral Commission of Palestine again requested the United Nations to provide similar support for the upcoming legislative elections.

B. Major electoral missions

34. During the review period, the number of United Nations peacekeeping missions with electoral responsibilities (Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Iraq and Liberia) grew while existing missions (Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo) continued to fulfil their electoral mandates. This trend demonstrates a strong consensus among negotiators and parties to negotiations alike that holding elections is a key part of peace processes, and that the participation of the United Nations in organizing the elections is often necessary to ensure their credibility.

35. While elections are justifiably regarded as the only means to ensure the legitimacy of a post-conflict government, post-conflict environments are extremely complex and the value of elections in consolidating peace depends on progress in parallel processes such as institution-building, disarmament, strengthening the rule of law and transitional justice. Experience has also demonstrated the need to include electoral expertise as early as possible in the peace process. The appeal to electoral expertise during the negotiation phase, for example, can assist in the establishment of a realistic electoral calendar and the prevention of vague language that confuses rather than clarifies the electoral mandate.

36. Similarly, electoral expertise during constitutional drafting processes can ensure that electoral systems are appropriate to the conditions of the country. Too often in the past, peace negotiations without electoral expertise resulted in agreements that unnecessarily limited electoral options and, more often than not, forced a postponement of the election date. The constitution-making process itself, in advance of elections, can help build public confidence if the process is participatory and consultative, and the outcome includes compromises by a range of constituencies. However, the making of a new constitution is not without risk for subsequent elections, and careful consideration should be given to its place in the political transition and whether it is a necessary precondition for elections. A failed

constitutional process, or one that leaves major divisions, can imperil the electoral phase.

37. In addition, where national adjudication systems are weak or lack credibility, having independent outside experts address major complaints can help provide that credibility.

38. The case studies below generally demonstrate effective United Nations interventions in extremely complex post-conflict electoral situations. They also caution that negotiated electoral processes need to be realistic, that electoral processes must be timed to coincide with parallel progress on other political and economic fronts and, above all, that elections, to be effective over the long term, cannot be considered proxies for lack of progress on these fronts.

Afghanistan

39. The previous report (paras. 49-52) described initial efforts of the United Nations to support the holding of elections in Afghanistan, as called for by the Bonn Agreement. The report also mentioned a number of obstacles — political, logistic and administrative — that made the undertaking extremely difficult.

40. In the latter half of 2003, the United Nations had created an electoral team from the Electoral Assistance Division roster of experts to help the Afghan Government undertake the activities needed to implement the electoral provisions of the Bonn Agreement, namely, conducting a comprehensive voter registration exercise and organizing national elections in accordance with the Constitution by June 2004. A Joint Electoral Management Body, made up of the seven members of the Interim Afghan Independent Electoral Commission and six international experts, was created to oversee this process. The voter registration project began in December 2003; when it ended in August 2004, a total of 10.5 million Afghans had been registered to vote, of whom 41 per cent were women.

41. The Constitution, adopted in January 2004, established an elected presidency and a bicameral National Assembly. The Joint Electoral Management Body and its functional arm, the Joint Electoral Management Body secretariat, made every effort to hold all elections required by the Constitution according to the June deadline. This proved impossible owing to a number of constraining factors, including delays in adopting the legislation required and in delineating formal district boundaries. As a result, the Management Body decided to delay the presidential election until the autumn of 2004 and the parliamentary election until the spring of 2005.

42. The presidential election was held on 9 October with 18 candidates contesting. On election day, 8.1 million voters, or 70 per cent of those registered, participated. Polling also took place among refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. President Karzai was elected with 55.4 per cent of the vote. Preparations began immediately for the legislative elections, which were then rescheduled for 18 September 2005. Tallying of the results of these elections continues at the time of the writing of this report. District council elections were postponed indefinitely, following the consensus among political actors that the new lower house of the Assembly should take the final decision on district boundaries.

43. Despite delays in the electoral process, the presidential election of 9 October 2004 and the lower house and provincial council elections of 18 September 2005 have played an important role in rebuilding the Afghan State on the basis of the will

of the people. The United Nations has played an indispensable role in promoting this process.

Burundi

44. In its resolution 1545 (2004) of 21 May 2004 the Security Council authorized the United Nations Mission in Burundi (ONUB) to contribute to the successful completion of the electoral process stipulated in the Arusha Agreement (para. 5). In consultation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Electoral Assistance Division developed a Concept of Operations and identified necessary resources for the electoral component of the Mission, comprising 118 international and national staff members. The component provided technical support for the establishment of a National Independent Electoral Commission and coordinated Mission activities in support of the electoral process.

45. Burundi held a successful and essentially peaceful constitutional referendum on 28 February 2005, with over 90 per cent participation of its 3.2 million registered voters. The approved constitution prepared the ground for the election of an ethnically balanced Government, after more than a decade of armed conflict in the country.

46. Communal elections were held on 3 June 2005, with over 70 per cent of the registered voters voting for municipal councillors. Following security incidents, recasting of ballots in the communal elections took place in Bubanza and Bujumbura Rural Provinces on 7 June. Legislative elections were held on 4 July and Senate elections on 29 July. On 19 August, the new Parliament elected Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD)) as President of Burundi. He was inaugurated on 26 August. The last of the constitutionally mandated elections, at the *colline* level, were conducted successfully on 23 September.

47. The post-conflict electoral schedule in Burundi, with its rapid series of complex elections, was extremely challenging. The establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the technical and extensive logistic support provided by the United Nations Operation in Burundi were crucial to the success of the process. The Electoral Assistance Division, in collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, had undertaken a major function in this achievement. The role of the donor community also proved crucial to the success of the process.

Côte d'Ivoire

48. Following delays in the implementation of the key provisions of the Agreement signed by the Ivorian political forces in Linas-Marcoussis on 24 January 2003 (the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement) (S/2003/99) and the agreement signed in Accra on 30 July 2004 (the Accra III Agreement), President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa convened a meeting of the Ivorian parties in Pretoria in April 2005 in his capacity as African Union Mediator. The meeting resulted in the signing on 6 April of the Pretoria Agreement on the Peace Process in Côte d'Ivoire (the Pretoria Agreement) (S/2005/270, annex I). Regarding the electoral process, the parties, acknowledging "the difficulties and sensitivities related to the elections", agreed "to make amendments to the composition, organization and functioning of the current Independent Electoral Commission" and mandated the Mediator to invite the United

Nations "on behalf of the Ivorian people to participate in the organization of general elections" and in the work of the Constitutional Council.

49. In its resolution 1603 (2005) of 3 June 2005, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to appoint, as an exceptional measure, a High Representative for the elections in Côte d'Ivoire. The High Representative is working with the Independent Electoral Commission to assist in the preparation of the elections and "verify, on behalf of the international community, that all stages of the electoral process, including the establishment of a register of voters and the issuance of voters' cards, provide all the necessary guarantees for the holding of open, free, fair and transparent presidential and legislative elections within the time limits laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire". The Office of the High Representative is to work independently from the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Administrative support and the necessary resources for the Office are being provided by UNDP. The Electoral Assistance Division is identifying staff for that Office from its electoral roster and continues to work with the appointed High Representative to ensure that he is provided with the expertise and technical guidance required to fulfil his mandate. It is worth noting that the United Nations has not been called upon to "verify" an electoral process of such magnitude since the elections in Mozambique in 1993-1994.

50. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire maintains its Electoral Division, which will provide technical assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission at all levels. It will share information with the Office of the High Representative on a regular basis, enhancing the High Representative's capacity to assess contentious situations rapidly and make the necessary determinations.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

51. In its resolution 1493 (2003) of 28 July 2003, the Security Council encouraged the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), in coordination with other United Nations agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations, to provide assistance, during the transition period, for the preparation and holding of elections, throughout the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In November 2004, President Joseph Kabila addressed a letter to the Secretary-General in which he requested the support of the United Nations for the electoral process through technical assistance and the coordination of all international support. Further to this, the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission requested the Organization Mission to provide logistic support including the transportation of electoral material and equipment from Kinshasa to 166 locations countrywide — 145 capitals of *territoires* and 21 cities.

52. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has had a small Electoral Assistance Unit since September 2003. Since then, the Unit has expanded into an Electoral Assistance Division, with a headquarters component, working directly with the Independent Electoral Commission, as well as field offices in 15 locations nationwide. The work of the Division had been important in ensuring that the voter registration started as scheduled on 20 June 2005 in the capital, Kinshasa. It was subsequently extended to the Bas-Congo and Orientale provinces in late July 2005 and to other provinces shortly thereafter. The exercise is expected to be completed by 13 November 2005. This will allow the referendum on the draft constitution to be held before the end of 2005. The

extensive logistic assistance provided by the Organization Mission has been vital in ensuring the implementation of the voter registration process.

53. At the same time, UNDP is managing a basket-fund project through which voluntary financial contributions by donor countries and organizations are channelled. Several experts working on managing the fund were identified from the Electoral Assistance Division roster.

54. The Electoral Assistance Division of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other components of the Organization Mission, in close cooperation with the UNDP-supported Project d'appui au processus electoral en RDC (APEC), are undertaking the largest electoral assistance programme ever carried out by the United Nations. Many challenges are being faced inasmuch as the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a huge country, much of which is densely forested, with very poor transport and communications infrastructure. The number of those eligible to vote is estimated at some 20-25 million. As of 4 October, some 14 million had registered to vote.

Haiti

55. Through a series of resolutions — 1542 (2004) of 30 April 2004, 1576 (2004) of 29 November 2004 and 1608 (2005) of 22 June 2005 — the Security Council called on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to assist the Transitional Government in preparing municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections at the earliest possible date. The electoral environment in Haiti is particularly challenging given the multiple crises that the country has experienced over the past decades and the limited ability of the Provisional Electoral Council to tackle the many technical challenges at hand.

56. The electoral component of the Stabilization Mission is charged with assisting the Provisional Electoral Council in planning and holding the elections, supervising all aspects of the process and assisting the Council in particular with regard to legislation, logistics, civic education and regional coordination. The efforts of the Stabilization Mission are closely coordinated with those of the Organization of American States, which is leading the voter registration exercise.

Iraq

57. In its resolutions 1483 (2003) of 22 May 2003 and 1511 (2003) of 16 October 2003, the Security Council encouraged an active role for the United Nations in the establishment of "institutions for representative governance" in Iraq. In February 2004, Electoral Assistance Division officials were part of a mission sent to Iraq by the Secretary-General in accordance with these resolutions to determine the feasibility of holding elections. The Iraqi Governing Council and the Coalition Provisional Authority subsequently requested that the United Nations facilitate the negotiation of electoral modalities and assist in creating an independent Iraqi electoral authority.

58. In March-April 2004, a mission led by the Director of the Electoral Assistance Division provided an extensive analysis of the steps required to hold elections and assisted with the establishment of an electoral framework. The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq was created through a public and participatory process, under United Nations auspices, in which 1,800 applicants were screened.

The eight selected commissioners were taken to Mexico for a three-week training course in electoral administration. The United Nations also named an international Electoral Commissioner to serve on the Commission.

59. In its resolution 1546 (2004) of 8 June 2004, the Security Council decided that the United Nations should play a leading role in advising and supporting the Iraqi electoral process. Following the adoption of the resolution and a request from the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, the Electoral Assistance Division deployed a team of electoral experts to Iraq to provide advice and assistance on the entire range of electoral issues leading up to the 30 January 2005 elections. These experts, together with personnel from other organizations, worked under the coordination of the head of the elections section of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, based within Commission headquarters in Baghdad. The election of a Transitional National Assembly that would draft a constitution, held successfully on 30 January, was an important milestone in Iraq's transitional political process.

60. Two additional electoral events are still expected in 2005, a constitutional referendum to be held on 15 October 2005 and subsequent elections for a new Government planned for no later than 15 December 2005. The planning and implementation of these two events are running in parallel and present major challenges for the Independent Electoral Commission for Iraq.

61. The United Nations has continued to work in close partnership with the Independent Electoral Commission for Iraq throughout 2005 in preparation for the upcoming electoral events. At the invitation of the Commission, a United Nations needs assessment mission visited Iraq from 5 to 26 June and made recommendations for the specific areas in which United Nations assistance would be most appropriate. An expanded United Nations electoral assistance team has been deployed to Baghdad and Amman to support the Commission in implementing the electoral process. Implementation has been further complicated by the volatile security situation and by delays in determining the legal framework within which the elections will be conducted.

Liberia

62. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by the former Government of Liberia, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (the Accra Peace Agreement) (S/2003/850, annex) signed on 18 August 2003 in Accra, had requested the United Nations and other international partners to assist in the conduct of the October 2005 elections. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established in September 2003. An electoral needs assessment mission was conducted by the Electoral Assistance Division in April 2004 to coincide with the inauguration of the National Elections Commission. The electoral strategy, agreed in 2004 between the National Elections Commission of Liberia, Liberian stakeholders and international partners including the United Nations Mission, underlined that the elections would be Liberian-owned and would be the responsibility of the Commission, and that the United Nations Mission would provide significant electoral technical assistance. As a result, the United Nations Mission created an Electoral Division in July 2005, consisting of some 30 staff and over 150 UNVs. Specific assistance was provided in the areas of: (a) operations, logistics and management; (b) electoral legal advice and legal drafting; (c) budgeting

and donor coordination; (d) civic/voter education; (e) database/information technology; (f) voter registration, polling and counting; (g) political parties' relations and nominations; (h) delimitation of electoral districts; (i) funding of electoral material and temporary electoral personnel; and (j) training and capacity-building.

63. Some 1.35 million of the estimated 1.5 million voter population registered during the voter registration period. Fifty per cent of registrants were women. Special measures were taken to ensure that internally displaced persons and refugees could register.

64. Challenges anticipated during polling included logistic problems due to the rainy season and the poor infrastructure, security problems, political challenges, and ongoing instability in the subregion. Voting took place peacefully on 11 October 2005 with a large turnout of Liberian voters. Election results are expected by 26 October. If no presidential candidate wins over 50 per cent of the vote, a presidential run-off election is expected by 8 November.

IV. Observations and recommendations

65. Electoral events in the period under review have demonstrated strongly both the value of democracy and the capacity of the United Nations to work effectively with its Members to promote this value. Nevertheless, many major challenges remain to be confronted in order for the United Nations to continue to respond effectively to evolving circumstances in the electoral field. While no electoral process is perfect and no system is ideal, the United Nations has nonetheless accumulated a wealth of experience and a body of best practices to assist in carrying out democratic elections in accordance with international standards. Over the next biennium, we will seek to consolidate and elaborate these practices for the benefit of Member States.

66. Requests for United Nations technical assistance in, and observation of, electoral processes, continue to increase, reflecting the recognition of the impartiality and quality of assistance. Member States also seek to gain legitimacy for their electoral processes through United Nations involvement. This must encourage us both to provide the necessary support and to seek to ensure that elections in which the United Nations is involved are in line with democratic norms and standards.

67. In the coming biennium, the United Nations must continue to build its capacity to respond effectively to the growing numbers of requests from Member States for electoral assistance. To this end, the United Nations will need to develop or recruit additional expertise in particular election specialties like voter registration, electronic voting, and training of election administrators. It will need to focus increasingly on ensuring the electoral rights and participation of minorities, internally displaced persons and women. United Nations assistance, moreover, should not be limited to helping election commissions and running elections: it should also be available to requesting States that ask for our help in building credible political parties, a free media, domestic observer groups, and other important elements of a democratic election process. Developing such capability will not only enhance the quality of the electoral assistance we can provide, but also

reinforce the existing links between electoral assistance and other key United Nations goals such as promotion of human rights and the advancement of women.

68. United Nations electoral assistance is most effective if it is delivered in the context of long-term programmes that build domestic capacity to administer sound elections. To contribute to this goal, the United Nations and the specialized agencies — with the support of Member States — must develop the means to ensure a consistent and sustained follow-up to our electoral assistance, so that our contributions are not lost and progress continues long after an electoral event.

69. With the establishment of the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance Activities, cooperation and coordination within the United Nations and between the United Nations and other organizations have improved. However, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/2005 and Corr.1 and Add.1-3) entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all", "(t)he impact of our work is reduced by the way we disperse it among different parts of our bureaucracy". Hence, efforts must be made to continue to strengthen the function of the Focal Point so as to ensure the most consistent and effective use of organizational human and financial resources, as well as to establish information management structures.

70. Furthermore, electoral experts should be included in negotiations of peace agreements when these involve elections, as they often do, in order to ensure that the electoral timetables in post-conflict situations are aligned with the practical modalities of organizing elections. Likewise, electoral experts should be consulted when new constitutions are drafted, to ensure that the drafters can benefit from the accumulated knowledge of how other countries have successfully addressed the issue of elections within their constitutional frameworks. The design of electoral systems that promote inclusiveness and political stability can be an important tool for conflict prevention.

71. A number of administrative issues must also be addressed. I plan to work within the Secretariat, with the specialized agencies and with Member States to review contractual and personnel issues, with a view to ensuring that the United Nations is in the best possible position to provide timely and high-quality electoral assistance.

72. The extent to which the United Nations has been able to promote and strengthen electoral institutions and practices has depended on the active support of Member States. In this regard, additional resources will be required for the United Nations, and specifically the Electoral Assistance Division, to effectively fulfil its mandate. These will be directed towards meeting the needs outlined above, including strengthening the role of the Focal Point, developing a stronger follow-up capacity, compiling documentation and conducting exercises on lessons learned, and continuing to develop knowledge and expertise.

73. Providing adequate resources for electoral assistance will be a challenge for Member States in the coming biennium and beyond. As requests for electoral assistance have grown, existing resources have been unreasonably stretched. Since elections are, in addition, generally conducted on a tight calendar, electoral assistance must be timely in order to be useful. Where elections assistance is provided in a post-conflict environment under a Security Council mandate — as has increasingly become the case — appropriate wording should be included in

resolutions to ensure that sufficient resources from assessed contributions are available. In cases where post-conflict electoral operations are funded through voluntary contributions, Member States are urged to provide funding as early as possible.

74. I therefore urge your continued support to ensure that the offices and programmes of the Organization can remain effective in deepening and broadening democratic trends throughout the world.